

Jan 23

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Congressional and Press

1. Rick Weiss, Congressional Relations Officer for DEA, phoned (open line) me twice late on the afternoon of January 22, 1975, giving the gist of a conversation he and Administrator John Bartels had with Senator Weicker (R) of Connecticut on Monday afternoon, January 20, 1975. The second call was to inform me that Shor of CBS, the New York Times, and other press people were energetically following the story. The attached items from January 23, 1975 editions evidently are the result, and give the main factual material Weiss passed to me in our first conversation.

2. Weiss indicated that he and Bartels had been asked by Weicker on Monday to keep the matters they discussed confidential, and they had agreed. Col. Conein apparently called on Weicker on Tuesday afternoon, Januarh 21, 1975.

3. The only emphasis in Weicker's presentation to the DEA officers not played in the press reportage, but stressed to me by Weiss, was Weicker's questioning about how CIA was "using" other federal agencies in its activities, how Col. Conein came to be on the Department of Justice payroll, and what was Conein's relationship to E. Howard Hunt, which had come to light last year in Watergate Committee staff interviews. Weicker allegedly indicated he is working closely with Senator Baker on the CIA angle.

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DDI Coordinator on
International Narcotics Matters

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cc: NARCOG, for Eloise Page

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DEA Was Offered Explosive Devices

By Lawrence Meyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

An Alexandria "electronics" firm attempted to sell an official of the Drug Enforcement Administration "assassination devices" designed to carry explosives in such unlikely places as a telephone handset, a cigarette pack or a flashlight.

The official, Lucien Conein, had gone to the firm last spring to inspect electronic surveillance equipment that DEA wanted to purchase, according to an agency spokesman, Robert H. Feldkamp. Conein and a second DEA official, Cyril H. Frank, also observed a demonstration of the explosive equipment but did not buy any of it, according to Feldkamp.

A catalogue of equipment apparently sold by the company, B. R. Fox, describes several devices designed to carry explosives triggered by time, movement, mechanical pressures, light, or audio mechanisms.

The catalogue states, "The devices have been designed and manufactured for sale to authorized agencies of the United States government, specifically intended for application outside of this country . . . The information contained herein is classified by the manufacturer for U.S. government use only. The handling and storage of this material should be done so mindful of its sensitive nature."

Feldkamp said that Conein and Frank observed a demonstration of "several" devices although Feldkamp said he did not know which devices they saw. Conein, a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency, is acting chief of special operations and field support for the DEA's office of intelligence. Feldkamp said that Conein's office is the operational arm of the intelligence division and devises ways to penetrate illegal drug operations.

Conein was not available for comment. Feldkamp said that Frank "said emphatically that the demonstration was not requested."

Conein's reaction to the demonstration, Feldkamp said, was, "Very interesting. However, that's not why I'm here." Asked why the demonstration was made by the salesman, whom Feldkamp said he could not identify, Feldkamp replied, "Like any good salesman, the guy was trying to make a sale. He was told DEA has not, will not, does not purchase that type of equipment."

The DEA did buy "a hundred bucks worth" of electronics surveillance equipment, which Feldkamp said is "frequently used [by the DEA] under court order."

Asked why Conein watched the demonstration, Feldkamp said, "You'd probably do the same thing out of curiosity or whatever."

Conein, a longtime employee of the CIA, left the agency in 1968 and joined the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, DEA's predecessor, as a consultant in June, 1972, according to Feldkamp. According to testimony during the Senate Watergate committee hearings, Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. attempted

to use Conein as part of an effort to discredit Daniel Ellsberg publicly.

According to Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.), who released information about the incident, Conein speculated that the Fox firm may have thought that Conein was still at the CIA.

Conein apparently did not report the demonstration of the equipment to anyone at the DEA. Weicker said he told DEA Administrator John R. Bartels about the matter on Monday and Bartels "was as shocked and aghast as most people would be." Weicker commented, "Things have come to pretty sorry pass when people start peddling this stuff to law enforcement agencies and nobody thinks it strange. Bugging equipment can be used legally. There's no way this equipment can be used legally."

Feldkamp said "It wouldn't be within the purview of DEA as a narcotics agency" to review the legality of the explosive equipment.

A cover memo dated June 10, 1974, written on B.R. Fox stationery by a person Weicker identified as Mike Morrissey to Mitchell WerBell III, a Georgia arms dealer, states that equipment in an accompanying catalogue of explosive equipment "was demonstrated to Lou in this office about three weeks ago . . . I bring this to your attention in case you have not yet seen the material. It is a listing of equipment that is available and planned for Lou up here."

WerBell, who said he made and sold silent automatic weapons to foreign countries with the approval of the federal government, said he had never seen Morrissey's memo because a former employee had intercepted it before WerBell could see it.

WerBell said that he had talked yesterday to both Morrissey and Conein. Conein, WerBell said, told him the equipment had never actually been made. "Lou's not in the assassination business and neither am I," WerBell said.

Morrissey could not be reached for comment.

Barbara Fox Spindel, whose home address is listed as the address for B.R. Fox Laboratories, said in a telephone interview last night that she had served as president of the company, founded by her late husband, but that she had disassociated herself from it last March because she and Morrissey could not get along. She said Morrissey withheld information from her about the firm's business.

Mrs. Spindel said that B. R. Fox is no longer functioning, that she knew nothing about the explosive devices and that she had never seen the catalogue describing them. "We never made explosive devices," Mrs. Spindel said. "We were making surveillance devices. That was our field."

Mrs. Spindel said she had received several calls from reporters about the catalogue. "I don't even know what you people are talking about. That's the worst part of all this," she said.

U.S. Aide Was Briefed on Assassination Techniques

By NICHOLAS M. HORROCK
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22.—A top official of the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration said today that he had been briefed on what have been described as electronic assassination techniques by a private manufacturer of wiretapping and bugging equipment.

The official, Lieut. Col. Lucien Conein, acting director of the special operations and field support section of D.E.A.'s international intelligence division, said that he received the briefing in May, 1974, from representatives of the now defunct B. R. Fox Company.

Colonel Conein said he had not asked for the briefing and had no interest in the equipment.

Several law enforcement officials and Senate investigators said that this was the first time they had seen evidence that a domestic Federal agency would even look at assassination equipment.

Served in Saigon

According to the Pentagon papers on United States involvement in the Indochina war, Colonel Conein was a senior operative of the Central Intelligence Agency in Saigon in 1963 and served as liaison between the United States Government and forces that disposed President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, who has been conducting an investigation of C.I.A. involvement with other government agencies, said that he has a copy of the catalogue of instruments described to Colonel Conein.

When questioned by a reporter, Mr. Weicker described the devices as "used for assassination, pure and simple."

"There is no place in this country for this sort of thing," he added.

Mr. Weicker said that he had brought the catalogue to the attention of John Bartels, administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and that he had interviewed Colonel Conein and the colonel's deputy, Sean Frank. He said that the officials had assured him that the agency had not purchased any of the devices.

Senator Asks Question

The Senator said that he had been told that the agency's men had done nothing to encourage the manufacturer to think that he might make a sale to their agency.

"My question was, why in the hell didn't they do something to discourage him," Mr. Weicker said.

One of two men who briefed Col. Conein, Michael Morrissey, told a reporter that he had met with him for three hours, showing him audio equipment and going over the devices described by Senator Weicker in detail.

Colonel Conein, asked about the briefing, said that he had not solicited the briefing on assassination aspects of Fox's equipment, and "I wouldn't touch that stuff with a 10-foot pole."

He continued: "That stuff is only good in a war, and who's got a war? It was very sophisticated stuff. They had a telephone that could be triggered by remote control. If the wrong person picked up the phone, you'd blow him up."

Colonel Conein said that he had found the material "fascinating" but that he had said nothing to encourage the idea that the agency would purchase such equipment. He said that he had purchased about \$500 worth of audio equipment from the B. R. Fox Company, which he said could be used for bugging.

The equipment he bought, he said, cannot be used in the United States without a court order but is for use in D.E.A.'s foreign operations. He said, however, that the gear had not been used, and "I still have it in my safe."

The briefing for Colonel Conein was conducted by Mr.

Morrissey and an unidentified New York man on behalf of the Fox Company, which had offices in Alexandria, Va., and New York City. Mr. Morrissey said that he had presented details on the company's electronic surveillance equipment and what the catalogue calls "astro equipment."

Senator Weicker has obtained a memo that he said was from the files of the B. R. Fox Company, written to an official of a Georgia arms manufacturer:

"Enclosed is a catalog which was put together only after we started working together with Lou Conein. I wrote out this line of 'astro' equipment with you and Lou in mind, and because of the nature of the devices, it is not being given to anyone else. . . . Some of this equipment was demonstrated to Lou in this office about 3 weeks ago."

Memo is Signed 'Mike'

The memo was dated June 10, 1974, and was signed "Mike."

It is part of the evidence that has caused Mr. Weicker to question whether the relationship between Colonel Conein and the assassination equipment manufacturer was a casual one.

When asked by a reporter about the memorandum, Colonel Conein said that he was shown it during an interview with Senator Weicker.

"I told him I had no idea the context in which it was written, and that I had not known Mr. Morrissey [before the sales demonstration]. I said if I was him [Senator Weicker], I would turn the memorandum over to the F.B.I. and let them investigate. I told him I would be glad to take a polygraph on the matter."

Colonel Conein said that he had listened to a detailed presentation on the booby-trap, assassination devices, but he did not "discourage" the manufacturer because he presumed that as a licensed electronics company it had the authority to produce the explosive devices.

Colonel Conein told Senator Weicker, as he had a reporter, that despite the presentation of the assassination gear, he had selected B. R. Fox out of several companies to provide bugging equipment. To make this purchase, Colonel Conein ignored the presentations of several better-known concerns.

Mr. Bartels, the agency administrator, said that he was conducting an internal inquiry into the transaction.

Mr. Morrissey identified a copy of the catalogue obtained by The New York Times as a photostat of one that he typed in the spring of 1974. The informal catalogue said that the material could not be delivered for two weeks after order and was for sale only to the United States Government. The following are excerpts on each item available:

1. "Telephone handset insert. Miniature activator with time delay . . . use inside telephone handset. Automatic charge fired at—SEC following lifting of instrument-handpiece."

2. "Cigarette pack — antistrike explosive. Electronics and explosive module packed inside cigarette pack. When the pack is lifted or moved in any manner, the explosive is set off."

3. "Modified flashlight . . . antistrike unit. Standard Eveready 2D cell flashlight has antistrike electronics built in inside where batteries have been removed. Remainder of the battery space is packed with explosive."

4. "Remote-controlled, light-activated sensor. Unit delivers a predetermined charge across its output terminals, when activated from a remote location according to its pre-set code. Use with explosive for firing upon the occurrence of certain conditions relating to light intensity."

5. "Booby-trapped, M-16 explosive clip. Use: A mechanically activated electronic charge circuit is built into a common military item. Upon removal of the single round in the magazine, either by firing or by hand removal, the explosive concealed in the magazine is detonated."

6. "Fragmentation ball — antistrike device. Similar in operation as the antistrike flashlight, BRF model FD-2. The exception is in the type of explosive charge . . ."

metal rectangular modules, one screw at each end secures top on unit. Top is removed to pack inside with explosive."

Mr. Morrissey said that he had prepared three copies of the catalogue, and that two copies were in the hands of Federal officials. He declined to identify the two officials or the Government agency they were connected with.

Mr. Morrissey also declined to identify the person who had introduced him to Colonel Conein. The colonel said that he could recall how he had learned of the Fox concern but that its name might have come from an acquaintance in Washington.

Mr. Morrissey, who said that he had a degree as an electronics engineer, said that he designed the equipment in early 1974 as an outgrowth of his work in the field of wiretaps and room bugs.

Mr. Morrissey, who also described himself as a lawyer, said that he believed the equipment he designed, which he said was an electronic triggering device, was legal as long as it was not armed with an explosive.

He said that it had nonlethal applications to trigger burglar alarms and other "anti-intrusion" equipment.

He said that he would consider selling such devices only to the Federal Government. He added, however, that he does sell electronic surveillance equipment to local police.

Mr. Morrissey said that the Fox Company was dissolved in November, 1974, as a result of management differences. He said he had shared management and control of the

company with Mrs. Barbara Spindel. The name Fox was Mrs. Spindel's maiden name, Mr. Morrissey said. He said that he continued to sell electronic surveillance equipment as an individual.

Mrs. Spindel confirmed that the company was no longer in existence and said that she was unaware Mr. Morrissey had circulated a catalogue for such devices. Her husband, the late Bernard Spindel, who formed the B. R. Fox Company, was often quoted as a wiretap expert.

Several law enforcement officials and electronic experts who were interviewed indicated that the devices as described in the catalogue appeared usable only for assassinations or for the booby-trapping of premises.

One veteran industrial security expert said that he saw no domestic market for the devices with private companies.

"Even on military installations or high security Government agencies, these types of booby-traps would be inappropriate, you'd never know who you might injure," this source said.

Colonel Conein said that he became a consultant to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs in 1972 and became a full-time official of D.E.A. in December, 1973. His name came up in Watergate committee testimony when it was disclosed that one of the Watergate burglars, E. Howard Hunt Jr., had met with Colonel Conein. Mr. Hunt at the time was gathering information to prepare bogus cables that implicated President Kennedy in President Nixon's assassination in 1963.